



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

II - ACTION PLAN

Application for HR Excellence in Research Award

Institution

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1. OVERVIEW

Legal duties and mission

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) was founded in 1808 as an advisory body to the Dutch Government, a role that it continues to play today. The oldest pillar of the Royal Academy is the learned society, which unites the best scientists and scholars from every conceivable discipline. The society advises the Dutch Government on policy, integrity and quality issues related to science and research. It also organises a wide range of activities intended to promote knowledge-sharing and knowledge generation. Please note that members of the learned society are not employees of the KNAW. Many of them hold high-ranking positions at Dutch universities and TNO.

The Royal Academy's statutory duties are defined by law. As the forum, conscience, and voice of the arts and sciences in the Netherlands, the Academy promotes quality in science and scholarship and strives to ensure that Dutch scholars and scientists contribute to cultural, social and economic progress (see <https://knaw.nl/en/about-us/duties>). Current president of KNAW, prof. Wim van Saarloos: "I like to call ourselves the guardian of Dutch science, where our greatest capital is that we have no direct self-interest. Universities can easily be blamed for standing up for their own interests. The KNAW stands for the importance of science across the board."

Furthermore, the Academy is responsible for the management of fifteen national research institutes.

Organizational information

Per 2017 the Royal Academy employs about 1120 staff. Of these, ca. 973 persons work at the Academy Institutes. Some 520 researchers make up the science staff proper, including ca. 130 individuals in temporary employment. These researchers range from PhD level to seniors, PIs and institute directors.

Academy Institutes are active in the humanities, the social sciences, and the life sciences; one works at the interface of science and government policy. Together, the Academy Institutes investigate a variety of subjects, ranging from the history of the Second World War to stem cells, from the phenomenon of sleep to the Frisian language, from the dynamics of the Great Tit population to medieval manuscripts. Academy Institutes have a mondial outreach and play a leading role in Dutch research. They serve as national centres of expertise, manage unique infrastructures and provide access to world-famous collections.

In order to become or remain an Academy Institute, the institutes are expected to continuously pursue unconditional excellence in their fields of expertise. Each institute is evaluated separately at a six-year cycle by an independent, international evaluation committee. These evaluations follow the *Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021* and the corresponding Academy manual for research assessments of Academy Institutes.

Knowledge-transfer to society has always been central to the Academy. To assist the institutes and individual Academy researchers in knowledge-transfer to non-profit and commercial domains, the Academy has recently (2015) set up its own Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO). It helps institutes and researchers to find the expertise needed and supports them in attracting funding.

The Academy's research institutes and its learned society are supported by the Academy Bureau, which has a staff of approximately 110. It provides and oversees the general policy lines, and where applicable supplies support and knowledge at an operational level to its institutes. The Academy Bureau is located in the 17th century Trippenhuis Building in the historic centre of Amsterdam.



Organisational Key figures (2017)¹

- The Royal Academy employs 1122 people in all, including 973 people working at the research institutes.
- Within the Academy Institutes, some 520 researchers make up the science staff proper, ranging from PhD level to seniors, PIs and institute directors. The science support staff, ranging from laboratory staff, IT-developers and collection managers, numbers ca. 310.
- In addition, the Academy hosts 128 externally funded guest researchers, fellows, and external PhDs.
- The current gender balance among the full KNAW staff is 49,8%.
- Within the KNAW science staff, c. 270 researchers have a non-Dutch background; they make up nearly 40% of the total science staff.
- KNAW is a fulltime research organization and so does not have students.
- Researchers at the Royal Academy enjoy a high degree of autonomy, independent of their rank, naturally within the frameworks of the research goals and targets set out by their contract and their PI's programmes, respectively.
- KNAW employs c. 170 PhD researchers (R-1 level). Not included in this figure are external PhD researchers involved in Academy research programmes. As a research organization, KNAW cannot grant doctoral titles, so the actual promotion takes place at a university.
- KNAW employs 128 postdocs (R-2 level).
- As a research institution, KNAW does not, nor can, set up university chairs. That said, most PIs at the Academy Institutes also hold a part-time or honorary chair at a university. In this quality, 86 researchers employed by KNAW in its institutes currently carry the title of professor.

Financial Key Figures (2017)

- The Academy's total annual budget amounts to € M 147.
- The share of annual direct government funding in this sum is € M 89.
- The total annual budget of the Academy's Institutes amounts to € M 117.
- The share of funding for research acquired in competition, including EU funding, is c. 33%.

Research Output Figures of the Academy's Institutes (2017)

- Scientific publications, including dissertations, books and book-chapters: 1306
- Articles in scientific open access journals: 59%
- Dissertations: 51
- Popularising and professional publications: 560

2. CHARTER AND CODE THEMES ['NARRATIVE']

2.1 General

The Netherlands has an established and well-functioning framework of laws, regulations, sector-agreements, and sector-wide protocols pertaining to the whole gamut of the science practice (employers, researchers, quality of research, professional standards etc.). Together, these closely align with the intentions and most attention points addressed in the Charter & Code and OTM-R.

The Academy has the duty to be instrumental, and is often leading, in setting up and implementing new agreements, guidelines and standards for the science sector, in cooperation with the national organization for the funding of research NWO (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/about-nwo>) and the Union of Cooperating Dutch Universities (VSNU), the employers' organization of the fourteen Dutch Universities. Usually, the development of new guidelines takes place in conjunction with similar developments on the European level. Cf. e.g. the European and Netherlands Code of Conduct for Researchers, respectively; or the guidelines for open data and open science.

¹ See KNAW Annual Report 2017, <https://www.knaw.nl/nl/actueel/publicaties/jaarverslag-2017>.



The Academy has a central HR department and, for the more operational level, eight Academy Institute HR managers working 'locally', some of them serving two or more KNAW institutes for practical reasons. All HR-managers regularly convene at the so-called HR Platform to discuss current developments.

HRM policy at KNAW is active and dynamic, with a keen eye on newly rising or future demands of its researchers and/or HRM managers, and with continuous attention for the streamlining of work processes, both digital and physical. The strategic HR goals, applicable to the entire organization including the fifteen Academy Institutes, are outlined in a four-year policy plan, currently the "Beleidsplan P&O [= HRM Policy Plan] 2016-2020". Operational procedures for HR professionals, managers, and staff at KNAW are described in the online Handboek P&O (Handbook HRM), which is currently undergoing a profound update. For the benefit of employees, there is the KNAW Career Centre which offers a wide array of (funded) career supporting facilities and in-company trainings, targeting themes such as vitality and prevention of burn-out, personal career advice, coaching or intervision, project management, academic leadership and more.

While KNAW is relatively late in applying for the EU HSR4R Award, the Steering Committee has found that, in effect, all 40 principles of the Code & Charter are fully operative within the organization. The Gap Analysis, including the results of a wide stakeholder consultation, has not yielded any deficiencies of note, or issues that are not already addressed in its current HRM policy plan. Rather, it has confirmed that KNAW HRM policy is up to the highest standards, as it should be.

Lastly, one of the pillars of the KNAW "HRM Policy Plan 2016-2020" is a further strengthening of internationalization. Since this is not a separate attention point in the Charter & Code, it does well to emphasize this aspect here separately. A continuous flow of international researchers to and from Academy Institutes is routine at the Academy Institutes. This is reflected in the high percentage of non-Dutch science staff – currently approaching 40%. They come from throughout the European Research Area and well beyond, e.g. the United States, China, India, Iran. It should be noted though that the number of non-Dutch employees can vary with the working fields of the institutes, as some of them are particularly engaged with (e.g.) Dutch language and culture and so require profound acquaintance with Dutch.

During the stakeholder consultation, the Academy's HR managers noted that KNAW at a central level, i.e. for the benefit of all Academy institutes collectively, could further improve on its assistance to the practicalities of this high percentage of international researchers. E.g. by providing all information, including day-to-day notices, unconditionally in both Dutch and English; and by aiding with residence permits, housing, language and acculturation courses, etc. KNAW takes these suggestions to heart and will discuss internally where intensification of central support can be realised.

2.2 Themes related to Ethical and Professional Aspects (Charter & Code nos. 1-11)

Ad principle 1: Research Freedom

The principle of research freedom is essentially beyond discussion in the Netherlands. Still, scientific independence and neutrality of perspective have become a renewed point of attention with the recent growth of public-private (commercial) partnerships in research and the relative polarization of societal debate. The Academy is actively vigilant in this respect. See most recently its advice report *Vrijheid van wetenschapsbeoefening in Nederland* ('Freedom of Research in the Netherlands'), March 2018 (see <https://knaw.nl/nl/actueel/publicaties/vrijheid-van-wetenschapsbeoefening-in-nederland>); and the endorsement of the Minister of Culture, Science and Education of KNAW's findings, April 3 2018 (<https://universonline.nl/2018/04/03/minister-concludeert-met-knaw-advies-wetenschap-geen-links-bolwerk>). The report has sparked a lively and ongoing discussion among scientists, as it should.



Ad principle 2: Ethics and professional conduct

As the conscience of science and scholarship in the Netherlands, the Academy is deeply committed to (also) the ethical aspects of research. It expresses that concern by offering advice, organising meetings and enhancing public debates. In 2015, KNAW found that new developments in science and the importance of scientific integrity would require a more fundamental consideration of the 2014 Dutch Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice. At the beginning of 2016, the chairmen of the VSNU, KNAW, NWO and NFU set the advisory committee 'Exploring the Dutch Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice' with a two-part task order:

- 1 explore the extent to which the Code of Conduct satisfies the requirements that can be set for such a code and whether a revision it is desirable;
- 2 reflect on the definition of plagiarism in the Code of Conduct (...) and the desirability of dealing with anonymous complaints about suspected violations of academic integrity.

At the end of June 2016, the Committee completed its "Advisory Report on the Review of the Code of Conduct for Academic Practice" (see <https://www.knaw.nl/nl/thematisch/ethiek/wetenschappelijke-integriteit>; and see also <https://knaw.nl/nl/actueel/nieuws/naar-een-nieuwe-gedragscode-voor-de-wetenschap>). In early 2018, the new Code of Conduct was ready in concept-form and subjected to wide public consultation, see <https://universonline.nl/2018/02/13/tientallen-wetenschappers-geven-mening-nieuwe-gedragscode> ('Dozens of scientists give their opinion on the new Code of Conduct'). The end result was launched in autumn 2018:

<http://www.vsnunl/files/documents/Netherlands%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Research%20Integrity%202018.pdf>

Ad principle 6: Accountability

With regard to the Charter and Code's attention point "Methods of collection and analysis, the outputs and, where applicable, details of the data should be open to internal and external scrutiny (...)": The Academy is an ardent champion of open science. The Academy's data principles can be summarised as follows:

- 1 Data generated by publicly funded research is a public asset, collected in the public interest for the benefit of everyone. This also applies if the research project has been privately funded (either entirely or partly).
- 2 Research data and the software used in processing it must be stored securely and permanently. It must be properly documented and traceable.
- 3 Research data and its processing software should, in principle, be openly available, as quickly as possible and with minimum restrictions on reuse.
- 4 Academy researchers demonstrate integrity and transparency when dealing with research data. They are clear when they are using data generated by others and comply with the conditions for using it.
- 5 If Academy researchers deviate from these principles, they explain why. (https://www.knaw.nl/en/topics/openscience/opensource?set_language=en).

Ad principles 8-9: Dissemination of research results, Public engagement

Dissemination of knowledge and public engagement is a core task of the Academy. At a central level, this materializes in an intensive agenda of public lectures, meetings and debates offered by Academy members to society (see https://knaw.nl/en/news/calendar?set_language=en). Likewise, the Academy institutes offer a wide range of public interest activities, both live and online (see e.g. IISG – <https://socialhistory.org/en>, or NIOD - <https://www.niod.nl/en>). Further strengthening the societal outreach of science is one of the pillars of KNAW's Strategic Agenda 2016-2020 (see <https://knaw.nl/nl/actueel/publicaties/wetenschap-verbindt-strategische-agenda-2016-2020>, Ch. 3)

As to economic valorisation, in 2015 the Academy's Knowledge Transfer Office (KTO) was set up in order "to help institutes and researchers seek the expertise needed for knowledge transfer and supporting them in attracting funding. In the Academy's view, knowledge transfer involves preparing knowledge for dissemination and sharing it with others. Knowledge transfer includes using knowledge for economic purposes, but also applying research results in societal contexts. Research outcomes in the life sciences



influence health care, food safety and environmental policy. Research outcomes in the humanities and social sciences influence cultural perceptions and historical awareness and produce economic and social innovations. Knowledge transfer can also have important advantages for research itself. By interacting with parties outside the scientific community, researchers may arrive at new insights that are meaningful for scientific progress. At the same time, institutes that have used knowledge to develop practical tools can generate new income. Although the Academy institutes will continue to prioritise outstanding basic research, a well-defined knowledge transfer policy will allow them to bridge the perceived gap between basic and applied research.” (see https://www.knaw.nl/en/institutes/kto?set_language=en)

Ad principle 11: Evaluation and appraisal systems

KNAW has played an active role in the recent update of the Standard Evaluation protocol (2015, 2016). The primary aim of the SEP is to assess the quality and relevance of the research to society and to supply recommendations for improvement where necessary. At six-year intervals, internationally composed review committees assess each Academy Institute individually on three criteria with a view to international standards.

- 1 Research quality: The quality of the unit’s research and the contribution that it makes to the body of scientific knowledge. The committee also assesses the scale of the unit’s research results (scientific publications, instruments and infrastructure developed by the unit, and other contributions to science).
- 2 Relevance to society: The quality, scale and relevance of contributions targeting specific economic, social, or cultural groups, of advisory reports for policy, of contributions to public debates, and so on.
- 3 Viability: The strategy that the research unit intends to pursue in the years ahead and the extent to which it can meet its targets in research and society during this period. It also considers the quality of governance and leadership skills of the research unit’s management. 2.3 Themes related to Recruitment and Selection (Charter and Code nos. 13-21)

Ad principle 12 and related: Recruitment, Procedures etc.

Detailed recruitment procedures, fully corresponding to the requirements of the Charter & Code (cf. nos. 12-21) and OTM-R, are carefully followed by the Academy Institutes, aiming as they do to always attract the best candidates available in the field. During the stakeholder consultation among the Academy Institutes, the professionalism, transparency and international (c.q. mondial) reach of current recruitment procedures was explicitly judged as very high by the interviewees.

See further below, sub 2.6 (Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment)

2.3. Themes related to Working Conditions and Social Security (Charter & Code nos. 22-35)

Ad principle 23: Research environments

Working conditions in the sense of safety etc. are precisely prescribed by Dutch law and strictly monitored accordingly. Another aspect of working conditions, however, are the ever-extending requirements of modern-day research environments as related to performing innovative research (cf. description of principle 23: “Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that the most stimulating research or research training environment is created which offers appropriate equipment, facilities and opportunities” etc.”)

In recent years, KNAW has devoted considerable investments, out of her proper means, in the research environments of her institutes, both online and physical. At the same time, next-generation large-scale research facilities are rapidly coming to surpass the possibilities of individual institutes and so institute-transcending coalitions are becoming the norm. KNAW acts as a driver and coordinator in various such consortia. Examples are the Spinoza Centre for Neuroimaging (<http://www.spinozacentre.nl/>), a collaboration entity for 3T and 7T MRI scanning of KNAW, University of Amsterdam and the Amsterdam Medical Centre jointly. Another example is the collaboration of three Academy institutes active in the field



of e-humanities in the KNAW Humanities Cluster (<https://huc.knaw.nl/>), and the coordinating role of the Humanities Cluster in the nation-wide consortium CLARIAH Plus - Common Lab Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (<https://www.clariah.nl/en/>).

On a par with Europe, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) has established a National Roadmap for Large-Scale Research Facilities, with a minimum annual government allocation of € M 80+; the applications, however, tend to massively exceed the available budget. See <https://www.nwo.nl/en/about-nwo/key+areas/large+research+facilities> and <http://www.onderzoeksfaciliteiten.nl/>.

KNAW is also active in agenda-setting for future large-scale research facilities. In 2015, KNAW asked researchers to describe 'dream facilities' that they believe could produce scientific breakthroughs in the span of a decade or more. The *Academy Agenda for Large-scale Research Facilities* is the outcome of that process. It is a collection of thirteen 'dream-proposals', covering the entire science spectrum, that could end up on the national or European roadmap in a few years' time; it so complements the National Roadmap, which describes facilities at an advanced stage of planning and a shorter time-horizon to construction. The *Academy Agenda* is meant to inspire young Dutch researchers to develop plans for research facilities operating at the forefront of knowledge, and to work together on turning those plans into actual proposals. (<https://knaw.nl/en/advisory-work/thirteen-facilities>)

Ad principle 27: Gender balance

"The higher on the academic ladder, the more monotonous the landscape becomes - few female professors and only a very few with a non-Western background. The facts are known and recommendations for diversity policy abound. But how do we achieve concrete change?" These were the opening lines of a 2015 KNAW Symposium dedicated to more diversity on the workforce. (see: <https://www.knaw.nl/nl/actueel/agenda/meer-diversiteit-op-de-academische-werkvloer>).

In recent years, the Academy has made serious work of gender balance her own organization, most visibly by appointing the first female president in the Academy's history, prof. dr. José van Dijck (2015-2018), an ardent advocate of more diversity. "We are on the right track with regard to the share of women", says Van Dijck, "but it can be really much better, especially in the higher management ranks of the universities and among the research leaders. The same holds for people with a non-Western background. (...) It requires policy that is aimed not only at educating and attracting women and non-western researchers, but also at their transfer to the higher echelons." (<https://resource.wur.nl/nl/show/KNAW-president-ziet-te-weinig-vrouwen-en-allochtonen.htm>). The recent appointment of prof. Ineke Sluiter as vice-president of KNAW (March 2018) has strengthened this movement (<https://www.advalvas.vu.nl/nieuws/knaw-benoemt-classicus-ineke-sluiter-tot-vicepresident>).

As of 2017, the overall balance within the Academy touched a near-perfect 49,8% division of male-female staff. But, true to the Academy's function as the voice and conscience of science, José van Dijck critically noted in her farewell-interview of May 2018: "In the Netherlands only one in five professors is a woman, a score ranking us among the three worst-performing countries in Europe. So there is still a big backlog. Fortunately, we are making progress. For example, the relationship between men and women among young academics is in balance now. That is very important; a balanced composition promotes the quality of science and consultation." (<https://fd.nl/weekend/1254577/vrouwen-staan-in-de-wetenschap-nog-steeds-op-grote-achterstand>)

Ad principles 28-30: Career development and access to career advice or support

Of all PhD candidates in The Netherlands, some 20-50% pursue further careers in academia; the remainder chooses to work for government, the non-profit sector, industry or NGOs. That is why the Academy actively supports the career paths of PhD students and post-docs, paying special attention to transferrable skills. The Academy's Strategic Agenda for 2016-2020, "*Science connects*", says the following in this regard: "... talented researchers (...) should regard an affiliation with an Academy institute as a



boost to their careers. The Academy aims to help its researchers acquire competencies relevant to careers in research, in business, or in the public or semi-public sector. At the heart of this policy is personalised talent development, i.e. helping each individual utilise and develop their specific talents.” (p. 26).

Against this background, the KNAW Career and Talent Development Centre offers a wide range of (funded) career development tools, in-company training courses and related services to all its staff, both temporary and permanent, for all ages. The offer has been thoroughly renewed and expanded per 2018, with a focus on both skill development and vitality, and includes advice on training, finding a mentor, intervision and coaching, information on traineeships or secondment, career advice, job-to-job guidance and an internal job database. See https://www.knaw.nl/en/about-us/work/talentdevelopment/working-on-your-career/in-company-training-calendar/incompany-trainingcourses?set_language=en

2.4 Themes related to Training and Development (Charter and Code, nos. 36-40)

See above.

2.5 Themes related to Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment

The Academy as a national research organisation largely lacks the pressure universities may feel to reserve job opportunities for their own students, PhD's and postdocs. Vacant positions at the Academy Institutes are regularly and deliberately fulfilled in the highest competition for the best researchers available. EurAxess is one of the recruitment tools routinely used by the Academy and her Institutes. At the moment of writing, eleven vacancies were posted on EurAxess, see <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/site/search?keywords=KNAW>.

See further above, sub 2.3.

2.6 Actions and Implementation

The Gap Analysis has not yielded any deficiencies of note regarding the 40 principles of the Charter & Code. On all aspects, KNAW can confidently report a “+”, in the sense of ‘well provided for’. As a reminder of the continued need for proper gender balance among researchers, though, KNAW has rated itself with a self-critical “+/-” score for this aspect.

As to OTM-R, KNAW declares with equal confidence that it complies with the highest standards and practices as it comes to open, transparent and merit-based (national and international) recruitment. Nonetheless, on the OTM-checklist KNAW has rated itself with a couple of “+/-” scores regarding some procedural aspects of securing the quality of the regular practice:

- Checklist no. 2: “Do we have an internal guide setting out clear OTM-R procedures and practices for all types of positions?”

Action: KNAW will provide internal guidelines for recruitment procedures in its Handbook HRM, which in practice aligns completely with the OMT-R procedures. In the process of updating the Handbook, currently underway, the KNAW guidelines will in part be rephrased in order to more directly connect with the attention points and jargon of the relevant Charter & Code sections and the OMT-R policy paper.

- Checklist no. 5: “Do we have a quality control system for OTM-R in place?”

Action: From 2018 onward, KNAW intends to include a brief paragraph regarding OTM-R in her annual report in order to publicly account for her compliance to the guidelines.

- Checklist no. 11: “Do we have clear guidelines or templates (e.g. EurAxess) for advertising positions?”



Action: While all Academy Institutes do follow such guidelines and templates in practice, KNAW will provide for a general, uniform template for all institutes (2018).

- Checklist no. 23: “Do we have a system in place to assess whether OTM-R delivers on its objectives?”.

Action: The Academy has no formalized system for this (nor, to be frank, has it felt the need to), but will include this in the new paragraph regarding OTM-R in her annual report for 2018 and beyond.

In general, KNAW will continue in the years ahead to execute and implement the actions outlined in its strategic multi-year plan 2016-2020, including new or evolving attention points that came up during the latest employee satisfaction survey (2017) and the stakeholder consultation (2018).